



Psalm 121

Inductive Discovery Lesson 17

The picture David paints for the reader in Psalm 121 is from the vantage point of standing in the Jericho Valley, some twelve hundred feet below sea level, gazing upward to the mountains surrounding Jerusalem. Walking this path would mean a potential encounter with the likes of wild animals, robbers, and rocky places in which one could stumble and fall. Visually a long, grueling, difficult climb lay ahead; spiritually there would come the affirmation that God was there all the time!

If you knew before you set out on your Christian walk how challenging the journey would be at times—would you have committed to making the trip? If you became aware early on of the slippery, uneven places and just how dangerous the path could become—would you make the same choices? Obstacles have a way of testing even the most ardent climber, but it is precisely those hurdles that can either make or break a person's resolve to go higher and reach the summit. Fortunately for the believer, we walk by faith and not by sight. What's up ahead or around the bend is doable when God is with us, making it more than worth the effort. *Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them who love Him* (1 Corinthians 2:9). The key to success in the climb is to *stay on the path* and keep your focus on the Lord. Let Him lead you to higher ground where you will thoroughly enjoy the view from "Mt. Perspective."

Did you know ~

Psalm 121 is one of fifteen Songs of Ascents (Psalms 120-134) that were sung at three annual festival processions as the Israelite pilgrims ascended to Jerusalem to worship God. It begins with an acknowledgment of God as Creator and ends with a declaration of personal trust in His providential care.



Psalm 121

Confidence in God's Protection

A Song of Ascents

1 I will lift up my eyes to the hills— from whence comes my help?

2 My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.

3 He will not allow your foot to be moved;

He who keeps you will not slumber.

4 Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

5 The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

6 The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

7 The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul.

8 The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in
from this time forth, and even forevermore.

OBSERVE

“Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.” – Psalm 119:18

The basic thing to remember about observing a psalm is that it is poetry—and poets think in images. Whatever type of psalm it may be (praise or lament, meditation or petition, just to name a few) the psalmist uses familiar images to turn his experience into a picture. He uses figurative language to reflect on God’s character and express the stirrings of his own soul.

Start by reading the entire psalm through a few times. You might try reading it aloud, or have someone else read it while you listen intently.

Some things to look for: Does the psalmist compare or contrast one thing to another? Does he repeat a specific word or phrase to emphasize a theme? The psalmist may use hyperbole (an exaggeration for the sake of effect, not meant to be taken literally). What experience does he describe? What emotions does he express? What characteristics of God does he mention? Does he make a vow or a declaration? Use the **first column** to describe what the psalmist says. Use the **second column** to jot down your own notes, thoughts, impressions or questions.

Write the definition of words listed in each section. Use a regular dictionary or an Old Testament Word Study dictionary if you have one.

Psalm 121:1-2

What the psalmist says:

My notes and personal observations:

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help (v.1,2) _____

Psalm 121:3-4

What the psalmist says:

My notes and personal observations:

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According to this psalm, what does the Lord do? What does He *not* do?



Did you know . . .

In the Bible, shadows or shade are frequently used as an image for protection, support, or refuge. In this psalm, the image of shade from sunstroke is likened to the protection a shield *“at your right hand”* would provide in battle. This dual image of shade and shield expresses the psalmist’s confidence in God’s unfailing comfort and protection.

Psalm 121:5-6

What the psalmist says:

My notes and personal observations:

Psalm 121:7-8

What the psalmist says:

My notes and personal observations:

preserve (v.7-8) _____



CONSIDER

According to Psalm 121 . . .

What makes you, as a child of God, completely safe and secure? _____

To what degree and for how long, does the Lord preserve you? _____

INTERPRET and APPLY

“The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.”

– Psalm 119:130

Look for a spiritual lesson. The imaginative language of the Psalms helps us to understand that God’s Word provides guidance for our feelings as well as our faith. As you look for spiritual lessons, keep in mind that this collection of prayers and songs teaches us how to worship God—not just with our lips but with our lives. While the Psalms address all aspects of life and human experience, ultimately they point us back to our Creator.

Ask: What is the theme of this psalm? How does the psalmist express himself to God? What does this psalm reveal about God’s character or His relationship with His people? Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed? Is there an example to follow or avoid? **State the lesson in one simple sentence.**

***“I pondered the direction of my life and I turned to follow Your statutes.
I will hurry, without lingering, to obey Your commands.”***

– Psalm 119:59-60 NLT

We don’t read the Bible just to gather information—we want to spiritually grow. Our heart needs to be open to change. The only way to move truth off the pages of your Bible and into your life is to **put it into action.**

To apply a spiritual lesson, we must examine ourselves and take deliberate steps to obey what we have learned. Ask yourself: What can I learn from the psalmist’s experience? How does this help to line up my feelings with my faith? Does it provide comfort? Does it provide correction? Think of how the lesson relates to you and what specific course of action you will take. **Write your application in the form of a question to make it personal.**

Psalm 121:1-2

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

_____?

Psalm 121:3-4

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

_____?

Psalm 121:5-6

Lesson: _____

Application: _____

_____?

Psalm 121:7-8

Lesson: _____

Application: _____
_____ ?

Summary

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the psalm is about. _____

Give your own title to the psalm to help you remember what it says.

Up close and personal

**I will lift up my eyes to the hills—from whence comes my help?
My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.**
Psalm 121:1-2

Memorize God's Word

Choose the translation you prefer to memorize the verse in and re-write it here.

Meditate on God's Word

As you memorize this verse, let it work into your heart and mind. Scripture meditation is like a good cup of tea: the longer it steeps, the richer the flavor. So give yourself permission to slowly savor God's Word! Use the questions below (like a tea bag) to keep dipping into this verse.

Challenge alert: You won't always see an obvious answer directly from the verse. Just *think and pray* about it and share what the Lord brings to your heart and mind.

Look up. What does this verse teach you about God? (For example, look for signs of His character, His attributes, His works, His promises.)

Look around. What does this verse teach you about the world and people in general?

Look within. What does this verse teach you about yourself?

Look ahead. Does this verse give you reason to hope? Briefly share your thoughts.

Look alive! Given the opportunity, how would you express the truth found in this verse to someone who needs to hear it?

Make God's Word Your Prayer

As you memorize and meditate on this verse, pray it back to the Lord. Let the Holy Spirit examine your heart, increase your understanding, and help you to pray. Ask Him for faith and strength to *act* on the truth of God's Word.



A Lamp to my Feet and a Light to my Path

What has been the most important lesson, for you personally, as you studied this psalm? How will you begin today to put what you are learning into practice?
